

Japanese Culture and Society (4 credits)

**The Japan Center for Michigan Universities
Hikone, Shiga JAPAN
In affiliation with Michigan State University
Fall Semester 2014
Instructor: Benjamin J. McCracken, Esq.**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-3:00 P.M unless otherwise noted in this syllabus.

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Course Description

This course focuses on culture through the use of novels, manga, television programs, movies, and other native Japanese materials. We will explore cultural differences between the United States and Japan and discuss by looking at materials created by Japanese authors and artists. We will observe the evolution of Modern Japan by examining Japanese life through these lenses and will take a critical look at the evolution of modern Japan from a closed society (Edo Period) to one of the world's economic super powers. We will look specifically at how modern Japanese cope with the struggles of everyday life, how the sexes interact, and how Japanese maintain their "unique" cultural identity in this global world. Because the course is offered on site in Japan, we have a unique opportunity to observe Japan. These observations should be incorporated into the writing assignments, class discussion, and presentations.

Instruction objectives include:

1. To learn more about and be able to compare one's own cultural and traditions through comparative inquiries of Japan and Japanese thoughts.
2. To recognize culture as something conditioned by our way of thinking.
3. To gain skills to facilitate inquiry into globalization and its impacts from the perspectives of others.

Course Requirements/ Assignments and Evaluations

- ◆ **Punctuality and Attendance:** Students are required to attend all lecture meetings, field observations, and other scheduled events programmed for this course. Excessive tardiness to class and class activities may result in the dismissal of a student from a program.
- ◆ **Absence Policy:** Your attendance is very important not only to you but also to other classmates. Due to the nature of Study Abroad, no unannounced absences will be permitted. Please refer Office of Study Abroad for further details (<http://studyabroad.msu.edu>). Your tardiness may be counted as 1/2 unexcused absence. Excessive unexcused absences may result in dismissal from the course.

◆ **Preparation and Participation:** This class is reading intensive with classes being discussion based. Students are expected to be prepared and participate. Students are expected to prepare for class by completing the reading assignments and preparing for selected discussion topics prior to attending class. Participation is a key element to your success in this course. Class discussion and interactivity with the class as a whole is critical to developing an awareness of the content described in lectures and readings. Students that are not prepared will be asked to leave the class and will be marked as absent. Participation constitutes 20% of your grade.

Papers: Students are required to write a one page paper at the completion of each unit. Students are given complete academic freedom in writing their papers. Paper should be grammatically correct without grammatical errors.

Presentation: The presentation allows the students to educate their classmates on a novel or manga of their choice. They will have maximum flexibility in showing what they have learned. This will also allow the participants to reflect broadly about cultural experiences and cultural values and how these figure into major lessons learned. Additional information concerning the contents of the presentation will be provided in an additional handout. *Specific dates and times will be provided.*

Required Reading

Hikone: A Journey in Time – The History of HIKONE (Manga)
Snow Country by Yasunari Kawabata
Wild Sheep Chase by Haruki Murakami.
Kitchen by Banana Yoshimoto

PLEASE NOTE: The reading list is **not** comprehensive and may be supplemented.

Academic Honesty and Classroom Etiquette

Students should always value academic honesty in their own work. In addition to other things, plagiarism is considered among the most blatant forms of academic dishonesty. This means that a student will not submit any written work that has been copied from the internet or any other form of published media. Additionally a student will not submit any work that has been written by another person without citing that source and will never submit another's work as his/her own. This would also include unacknowledged paraphrasing. As specified by university policy, such academic dishonesty may result in a penalty grade for the course. For more information on academic dishonesty policy please refer to the Ombudsman webpage: <https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>

Grading Criteria and Grading Scale

You will be graded on four elements: a) 4 papers or projects, b) attendance, c) participation, d) presentations as described above.

Attendance	Participation	Writing Assignments	Presentation
10%	20%	40%	30%

NOTE 1: Attendance makes up to 10 % of the whole course grade. However, if a student misses three (3) classes without permission or medical excuse, the student may be terminated from the course.

NOTE 2: Participation means “active” participation. Simply being there is not the same as participating. Points for participation will be awarded only when students are actively engaging in classroom activities, discussion, field exploration, and other learning activities for this course.

Grade Breakdown

Conversion Table between 4.0 Scale and Points

4.0 point	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	0.0
90-100	85-89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	59 & below

Class Schedule and Assignments

Please note that the student is expected to have read and studied the assigned reading and prepared for discussions prior to each class. Be sure to bring to class the texts under discussion.

Week 1: Introduction to the study of culture. (September 4th)

No readings.

Video: A Life in Japan – Documentary (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prNYOW0 kms>)
Video will be shown during class time.

Assignment: Complete questionnaire about first impressions

Week 2: Hikone and the pre-Meiji Japan (September 9th and 12th)

Reading: Hikone: A Journey in Time – The History of HIKONE (Manga)
Field Trip: Hikone Castle and Hikone Castle Museum

Week 3: Yukiguni – A look at love and relationships in pre-war Japan with a focus on traditional male and female roles, including discussion of geisha and modern equivalents. (September 16th and 18th)

Reading: Snow Country by Yasunari Kawabata

Week 4: Yukiguni cont. (September 25th – This class is 3 hours)

Film: “Geisha Girl” a BBC documentary following a young woman on her path to become a geisha. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uP1BBw3IYco>

Week 5: World War II and the scars of war (September 29th and October 2nd)

Film - Grave of the Fireflies (火垂るの墓 Hotaru no haka)

Week 6: World War II Continued (October 7th and 9th)

Film - Eien no Zero (永遠のZero)

Saturday Field Trip: Destination to be determined

Week 7: Post War Japan (October 14th and 17th) **PAPER 1 DUE**

Reading: Japanese Constitution and Proposed Amendments to Japanese Constitution

Week 8: Wild Sheep Chase – Discussion about post World War II Identity and modern Japanese life. The novel also includes Shinto elements and animism. (October 21st and 23rd)

Reading: A Wild Sheep Chase by Haruki Murakami

Week 9: Wild Sheep Chase Cont. (October 28th and 30th)

Reading: A Wild Sheep Chase by Haruki Murakami

Week 10: Minority Groups (November 4th and 6th)

Reading: Japanese legal cases regarding Koreans, Ainu, and Burakumin

Week 11: Minority Groups Cont. (November 11th – This class is 3 hours)

Reading: Japanese legal cases regarding Koreans, Ainu, and Burakumin

Week 12: Kitchen – Discussion about modern Japanese women, family, and relationships (November 20th – This class is 3 hours) **PAPER 2 DUE**

Reading: Kitchen by Banana Yoshimoto

Week 13: Kitchen continued and review (November 25th and 27th)

Reading: Kitchen by Banana Yoshimoto

Week 14 Student Presentations (December 2nd and 4th)

Week 15 Student Presentations (December 9th – This class is 3 hours)